DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 322 605 EA 022 118

AUTHOR Aks, Robert G.
TITLE The Emergence of Human Resource Management as a Profession in the Public Schools.
PUB DATE Feb 90
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of School Administrators (San Francisco, CA, February 23-26, 1990).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Change; Educational Innovation; Educational Planning; Elementary Secondary Education; Humanization; Human Resources; Labor Force Development; Needs Assessment; Organizational Objectives; *Personnel Management; Productivity; Professional Training; *Public Schools; School Administration; *School Restructuring; Training Objectives

ABSTRACT

Within the private sector, the human resource management perspective has replaced the traditional personnel management approach. A similar evolution within the educational community is necessary for implementation of successful school reforms. Presented in this paper are an overview of the transition from personnel management to human resource management in the business sphere, a discussion of school reform issues within a human resource management perspective, and recommendations for educational administration. School reform is characterized by two conflicting issues: empowerment and restructuring; and recruitment and retention. Utilization of human resource management principles is useful for achieving each of these goals. A recommendation is made for the inclusion of human resource specialists in key school district administrative positions. (8 references) (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED322605

THE EMERGENCE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AS A PROFESSION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Robert G. Aks

EA 022 118

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Robert G. Aks

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE EMERGENCE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AS A PROFESSION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Robert G. Aks

The management of human resources in public school administration is emerging as the most significant task that practitioners will have to face in the 1990s. What is startling is that superintendents and Boards of Education are only addressing the issue peripherally.

The private sector has done away with the notion of "personnel management" in favor of a human resource professional whose scope and authority pervades all segments of the organization. Impetus from the private sector has resulted in an academic specialty in human resource management in university business curriculums, the elevation of human resource professionals to the highest administrative levels of organizations, and the imposition of rigorous standards of education and performance for these individuals. The same priorities must be given by policy-makers in the public schools if proposed reforms in education are to succeed.

This article will first explain the recent evolution from personnel management to human resource management. It will then cite issues in current school reform as addressed in recent literature and discuss them within a human resource management framework. It will conclude with an argument for trained human resource specialists in key administrative roles in school districts.

The Evolution of Human Resource Management

In September 1989, the American Society for Personnel Administration, the flagship organization for personnel professionals, changed its name to the Society for Human Resource Management.

Following suit, in January 1990, the Society renamed its publication from Personnel Administrator to HR Magazine. Recently the profession has taken bold measures to adapt to the increasingly diverse nature of the workforce and employees' changing expectations of their jobs.

Years ago what most people wanted was steady work and a livable income - something that was relatively secure and long-term. That mind set no longer exists. Employees in the 1980s have been less attached to their employers than to their careers. When the career was not furthered, the employee left. Fewer people are now content with "ordinary" jobs. They look for things such as "personal fulfillment" and "satisfaction" to describe their career goals. In addition, people attach other values to their work, values that involve family and quality of life, which did not exist a generation ago. It has become a different world for the human resource professional, who is responsible for keeping employees on the job and motivated to do those jobs well. (1)

Corporate America as well as American public schools now deal with an increasingly independent breed of employee. Issues for the 1990s include more participatory management, flexible personnel policies, more market-driven compensation levels, more choices of benefits (health, retirement, dental and vision plans, tax shelters, etc.), more explicit employment contracts, and building a strong organizational culture with a widely shared set of values and beliefs. (2) As employee demands have matured, organizations have recognized that a new breed of human resource professional must be trained to respond to employees' needs. The notion of administrators "managing" personnel is no longer appropriate. A more comprehensive title is needed that better identifies the extensive responsibilities demanded from personnel

office staff. As a result, the concept of human resource management has emerged.

Many of the functions of the human resource department have stayed the same. The office still retains responsibility for recruitment, retention, affirmative action, labor relations, employee benefits, salary administration, staff evaluation, training, and data management. However, the approach to these functions is changing as employees' needs change. Colleges are re-orienting their curriculums to respond to this change by developing specialized areas of study and degrees in human resource management. Private businesses are demanding these trained professionals to staff and manage their human resource departments.

To be competitive with the private sector, public sector organizations must now place equal emphasis upon its human resource management function. In the past some public schools have used the position of Personnel Director as a dumping ground for tenured school administrators who could perform nowhere else, or as a token minority position in the central office, or as a convenient title for the performance of some other function. School officials must root out practices which undermine the true role of the personnel professional.

Empowerment and Restructuring

Public schools are now on the crest of another wave of educational initiatives and jargon, inspired by The National Commission on Excellence in Education's A Nation at Risk: An Imperative for Educational Reform.(3) Issues such as an eleven month contract for teachers, career ladders for teachers, and master teachers sparked the imagination of university faculty, school administrators, and teachers.

(4) The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy in A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (5) followed with a discussion of professionalization of the teaching staff. Flexibility in the structure of the school day (6), collegial styles of decision-making (7), and a restructured salary schedule seemed like good ideas to the Forum for achieving excellence in the schools. Ernest Boyer in High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America (9) discussed career paths for teachers, and Gene Maeroff outlined "A Blueprint For Empowering Teachers" in the Phi Delta Kappan (10). Conceptually these notions seem to have value in charting the future of our public school systems. Nevertheless, the one unavoidable hurdle facing school innovators is that all the above initiatives are terms and conditions of employment and must be negotiated at the bargaining table. Teacher organizations have not lost sight of the "bargainability" of these items and have taken the lead, in many instances, as advocates.

For a variety of reasons the negotiations arena is changing from being adversarial to one of cooperation and joint decision-making. School districts are being urged to improve the relationship between management and teachers. A new breed of school employee is searching for avenues to achieve better job and personal satisfaction at the worksite. This type of pressure is causing the leadership on both sides to re-examine their bargaining tactics. Further, competition for new hires caused by a diminishing workforce is beginning to play a significant role in changing the conduct of labor relations in schools.

A supportive public calling for educational change and excellence in schools is fueling the movement for innovation. Increases in spending for salaries and employee benefits, which only a few years ago would have caused budgets to be defeated at the polls, are now

sanctioned.

The human resources issues of compensation, fringe benefits, workday/workweek, and training are having a significant effect upon instructional issues. While approving increased staff costs, the public is demanding more relevant and understandable methods for teacher certification and performance evaluation to justify higher expenditures. Communities not only want involvement, but they want to understand clearly the changes that are taking place.

To avoid being misunderstood, managers must coherently explain the context in which higher staffing costs will occur. Will increased costs be addressed from an instructional or human resources perspective? For example: are higher salaries paid to encourage teachers and administrators to become more involved in curriculum and teaching issues, or are higher salaries paid to attract better teachers and administrators in a more highly competitive job market? School districts that have recently increased salary and benefits expenditures in the name of educational innovation rather than from a recruiting perspective are beginning to face severe criticism from their public and their peers due to the district's failure to meet public expectations.

Recruitment and Retention

Over 75% of any school budget is for salary or salary-related items. It logically follows that educators need to justify innovative change within the context of the expertise and quality of its instructional workforce. Linda Darling-Thomas in Beyond the Commission Reports: The Coming Crisis in Teaching (11) examines predicted teacher shortages facing the schools and the academic deficiencies of entrants

into the profession. She emphasizes that to cope with proposed reforms, changes in the salary structure, more rigorous teacher preparation, and higher standards of professionalism must occur. The questions that emerge are 1) how many teachers are needed and what types of skills must they have for a school district to deliver the instructional package it proposes, and 2) are schools capable of retaining or recruiting the trained and talented professionals to carry out proposed educational changes?

The first question initially raises issues of identifying the type and number of teachers that schools wish to recruit or retain. Answers will vary depending upon the type of program a school district wishes to begin. Trained human resource specialists can help school districts by preparing a human resource plan.

By definition, human resource planning is a structured approach to assessing whether a school district has the right number and kinds of people in the right assignment at the right time, capable of effectively and efficiently completing those tasks that will aid the district in achieving its objectives. The methodology integrates strategies such as a human resource inventory (assessing the potential of the workforce by identifying the overall skills available) and a job analysis (defining the types of jobs performed, the minimum acceptable qualifications needed to perform those jobs, and the minimum acceptable performance to get the job done properly) with the changes needed to achieve the plans and goals desired. The result is a plan which identifies the type of teacher a district should encourage to remain teaching, and the type of teacher a district should be recruiting when vacancies occur.

An answer to the second question is more complex. It relates

directly to the ability of a school district to compete within a highly competitive and selective global labor market. Human resource specialists charged with recruiting replacements in school districts face a most unusual and challenging labor market. Elizabeth Dole in her remarks to the 1990 Association of School Administrators Convention in San Francisco stated that 80% of the entering workforce of the 90s will be minorities and women. In addition, an aging population and falling birthrates which diminish the pool of younger workers will lead to sharp competition between the public and private sector for employees. Although affirmative action programs will benefit from the pool anticipated, women, that segment of the population which forms the majority of the teaching workforce, will be in demand. To achieve the goals of a human resource plan, a school district must now approach human resource management within a more global framework that responds to the significant emerging trends which are reshaping the workforce.

Retaining competent professionals is becoming increasingly difficult. The prospect of radical salary increases has slowed retirements, but the exodus of aging professionals is inevitable. As the global labor market becomes more attractive to education professionals who are not of retirement age, they will leave the schools for other positions that provide better salary, benefits, and quality of life.

Although the issues of restructuring and empowerment have emerged as a result of pressure on the schools for reform, the implementation of reforms are equally important in attracting and retaining a talented professional workforce. A comparison can be drawn to the proverbial tail wagging the dog analogy: what wags the tail of the reform movement? Is the reform movement a function of the educational system

seeking change in archaic practices, or is the reform movement a function of the educational system struggling to survive facing a significant drain of its professional staff. At this time superintendents are motivated to reform in the name of instructional improvement. However, it will soon become quite clear that the reform movement will be a crucial factor in attracting and holding qualified staff.

A New Understanding of Human Resource Management

Change in teaching students and running schools are clear agendas for the decade ahead. The greatest barrier to change lies with people, not technology. Over time, individuals in an organization acquire a shared cognition about how work is done and how external events and pressures translate into organizational actions. In the past, school districts have responded slowly and ineffectively to external demands for change. Success of public school districts in the 90s will be a function of the capacity for individuals in the school community and the school organization to adapt to continuous change.

Consequently, the management of human resources, the "people" function of organizations, will play a key role in developing strategies which will help all school employees perceive new directions and accept changes quickly. Using human resources goes beyond attracting the best people. Having the best athlete, for example, does not guarantee a sports team a victory. Victory comes from using the competencies of the athlete and molding them into a synergistic whole so that the team is more competent and powerful than the sum of the individuals. Likewise, Human Resource Management is not merely attracting and retaining good people. It is also instituting organizational systems and processes that enable individuals to add

value within a larger organizational unit.(12)

Human Resource Management in public schools should play a central part in creating and sustaining sound innovative instructional change for three reasons. First, proper management of human resources enables instructional innovation and achievement to happen. No innovation or teaching strategy occurs without working through people. The tools of human resource managers are designed to translate strategies to activities that directly affect individual behavior and attention. For example, human resource professionals are trained to couple personnel data with established organizational goals to assess the people needs of the school district and prepare appropriate plans to recruit, develop, motivate, and retain people. Integrating operational, instructional, financial, and human resource components into a school district's strategic plan is the aim of this activity.

Second, Human Resource Management focuses individual attention on an organizational mindset. In an organizational setting, human resource practices serve as primary tools for sharing information and shaping behavior. For example, when an extensive orientation program focuses upon the philosophy and objectives of the school district, the district is communicating a set of values through a human resource practice. Or when teachers and administrators are required to participate in training programs, they are learning through their attendance and involvement a shared mindset. These human resource practices build an advantage because they affect information and behavior of individuals in the organization and may be used to create a shared mindset among employees.

Third, Human Resource Management builds the capacity for change. Individuals have difficulty changing unless there is sufficient

pressure or need felt to change. Value laden practices such as a performance evaluation system which evaluates based upon district objectives, a heirarchial salary structure based upon assigned additional responsibilities or predetermined activities, or a training program that highlights core values and principles that build individual capacity for change are powerful motivators.

Training Human Resource Professionals for the Public Schools

Human resource professionals must be both reactive and proactive, employee advocate and administration defender, task and service oriented, operational and strategic, qualitative and quantitative. Balancing paradoxical expectations and roles will require new thinking for the public school's human resource professional. Training and mastery in state-of-the-art practices such as staffing, development, appraisal, rewards, organization design, and communication are integral components of the tools for success.

However, the ability to understand current human resource practices is not enough. Public school human resource professionals need skills to manage the change processes so that instructional needs merge with human resource activities. Merely knowing the substance of a new benefits or compensation program does not guarantee that it will be used by and useful to a school district. The ability to manage the change processes and build commitment to a new program becomes a central skill for developing and implementing human resource activities.

Adequate training for public school human resource professionals to meet the needs of the 90s is sadly lacking through any of the institutions that currently provide training for school administrators.

It is probable that until school boards and superintendents realize that significant and lasting educational change can not take place without a change-oriented human resource program for the district, appropriate training facilities will not be provided.

Human resource professionals with vision will have to provide the impetus for training. Their guideposts will be found in the private sector. With leadership from these skilled school human resource administrators, a theoretical and practical foundation for a progressive human resource management curriculum can be generated.

FOOTNOTES

1. John T. Adams III, "From the Publisher," Personnel Administrator, The Magazine of Human Resource Management (September, 1989): p.4.
2. Charles F. Hendricks and Gerald L. McManis, "Fitting the Homeworker Into Corporate Culture," Personnel Administrator, The Magazine of Human Resource Management (September, 1989): pp. 38-48.
3. National Commission on Excellence in Education, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Education, April, 1983).
4. Ibid, p. 31
5. Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (New York: Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, May, 1986).
6. Ibid, p. 40
7. Ibid, p. 56
8. Ibid, p. 101
9. Ernest Boyer, High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1983).
10. Gene I. Maeroff, "A Blueprint for Empowering Teachers, Phi Delta Kappan (March, 1988): pp. 472-477.
11. Linda Darling-Hammond, Beyond the Commission Reports: The Coming Crisis in Teaching (The Rand Corporation, July, 1984).
12. David Ulrich and Arthur Yeung, "A Shared Mindset," Personnel Administrator, The Magazine of Human Resource Management (March, 1989): pp. 38-45.

Dr. Robert G. Aks is Director of Personnel and Administration for the Baldwinsville, New York Central School District.